Zuniga/Veteran decries gay-ban compromises

From B1

be treated with the respect they deserve, that order will be followed.

"The military has always been a place for setting social equality. It helped blacks integrate into society and it has helped women. This is the final leg of that goal."

But the battle that Zuniga is fighting now could go on much longer than any in Desert Storm.

"I don't know how long this battle will go on. I do know that it is necessary," he said. "The other side has nothing but fear and ignorance to state their case. Gays and lesbians have solid evidence.

"Look at my career in the military. What threat did I pose?"

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We don't need to learn this lesson again. The surest way to reduce the deficit is to restrain spending. Lawmakers supporting a record tax increase should be prepared to explain to American families why this forced, severe belt-tightening by every household is preferable to modest belt-tightening by the federal government.

Mitchell is McKenna senior fellow in political economy and Hodge is Grover M. Hermann fellow in federal budgetary affairs at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based public policy research institute.

MILITARY

GT 6/13/93

Ex-soldier fighting new battle

Gay vet tired of living a lie

By **Louis Aguilar**
Gazette Telegraph

Just as he volunteered to be a front-line combat medic in Operation Desert Storm, Jose Zuniga has thrown himself into the heat of the gay rights battle.

The highly decorated soldier who was booted from the Army after publicly declaring his homosexuality has become a high-profile symbol of the fight against the ban of gays from the military.

He was in Denver this week as part of a two-month tour to speak out against the ban.

"I want to show that the ban is absolutely ludicrous," he said. "I served my country in exemplary fashion, just as many gays and lesbians do. The only reason that I can't continue to serve is because of irrational fear of gays, and hate."

Zuniga received five awards for his service in Desert Storm, and in 1992 the Army declared he was the best soldier in 12 Western states. But now he's sharply critical of the compromise proposals being suggested in Washington be-

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Zuniga received five awards for his service in Desert Storm, and in 1992 the Army declared he was the best soldier in 12 Western states. But now he's sharply critical of the compromise proposals being suggested in Washington because of the fierce backlash generated by the idea of allowing avowed homosexuals into the military.

U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, an openly gay Massachusetts Democrat, has floated a compromise plan in which military recruits would not be asked their sexual orientation. But the military would still be allowed to discharge openly gay personnel.

"That would mean you would still have to live a lie," said Zuniga, 24, "That's not the point of this. The goal is that gays and lesbians in the military deserve the same treatment as heterosexuals."

The baby-faced war veteran openly declared his homosexuality to 500,000 people at the gay march on Washington in late April, and within 30 days of his "coming out" he was honorably discharged.

"I wasn't living up to duty, honor and country like they told me during the soldier-of-the-year ceremony," he said. "If I was to to be honorable, like they said, I had to stop living a lie . . . and go public about my homosexuality."

Zuniga says anti-gay sentiment is not as rampant as the media has portrayed it to be, and that the military is an ideal institution to establish rules that protect the rights of open gays and lesbians.

"One of my commanding officers in Desert Storm knew that I was gay. He didn't care because he knew that I was a good soldier. If you send the message from the top down that gays will

See **ZUNIGA**/B12

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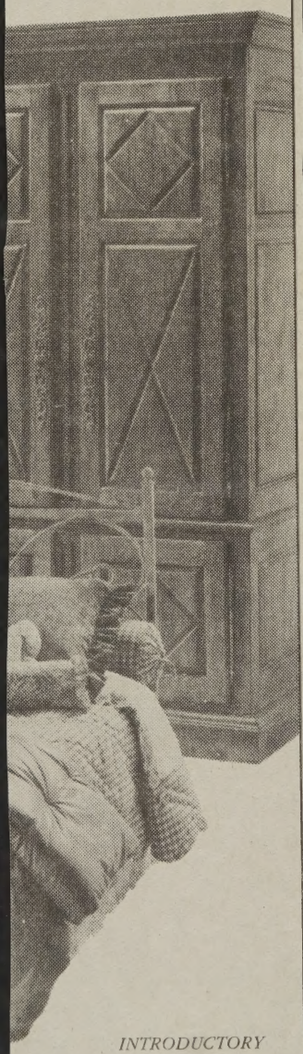

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